

February 8, 2007

SB 390—Indian Education for All

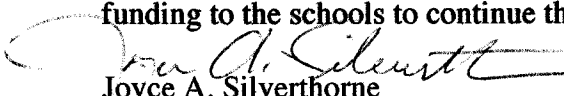
In the Native American traditional world, we learn from the generations who came before and we live to make a good world for the generations yet to come. My grandfather's tribal allotment of land in the Mission Valley (prime ranch land) was taken through a "forced sale" the same year our reservation was opened to homesteading.

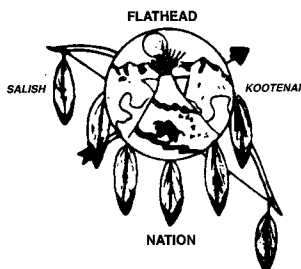
Each day, I make a choice to devote my efforts to creating an education system where my great-grandchildren (the eldest in kindergarten next year) have the opportunity to learn about their heritage, feel a full membership in their school, and are challenged to reach the best of their abilities.

In those efforts, it has been necessary to learn a system that was foreign to my parents. I am the first person in my family to graduate from college and go on. I am grateful for the support and encouragement of our parents. I owe to my children's children a better education system.

There are not models to copy in Indian Education for All—the collective we who are Montanans bear the responsibility to make this work and make it quality. From 1999's HB 528 passage to 2005's legislature the steps to implementation were hard fought, small, and there were setbacks. Without funding, it is too great a task for education entities to accomplish. The key is funding.

Please respect the hard work this legislation represents. PASS SB 390 and provide funding to the schools to continue this historic process.


Joyce A. Silverthorne
Dixon, Montana



THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES
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To: The Honorable Members of the House Education and House
Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Scott Sales, Speaker, Montana House of Representatives
The Honorable Representative John Parker, Minority Leader of the House

From: James S. Steele, Chairman, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

Date: March 14, 2007

RE: SB 390 - Increase funding for Indian Education for All

We join the Montana Education Community (Superintendent OPI, Board of Public Education, Montana Quality Education Coalition, Montana Rural Education Association, MEA-MFT, Montana Association of School Business Officers, School Administrators of Montana and Montana School Board Association) to give our full support for SB 390 - Increase funding for Indian Education for All. SB 390 will increase the level of funding for schools from \$20.40 per ANB as proposed in the Governor's budget to \$50.00 per ANB.

The public education system of Montana provides the future leaders/employees to our tribes. The future economic stability of the reservations in Montana is interdependent with the knowledge of Montana Indian diversity, unique histories, cultural stories, and sovereignty.

The legislature should be aware of the following:

Montana Indians are full members of the "we" that you, our legislators, represent.

The CSKT leadership (Tribal Council) value the education of all children about American Indians.

Not until 2005 did the state acknowledge and begin working on the American Indian Achievement Gap.

The "Montana Tracks Project" funded by CCSSO in 1988 was the first time the state even looked at its rosters to know the school age population percentage is 2 to 3 times that of the state American Indian population percentage.

Funding is critical because by funding we tell the world what is important.

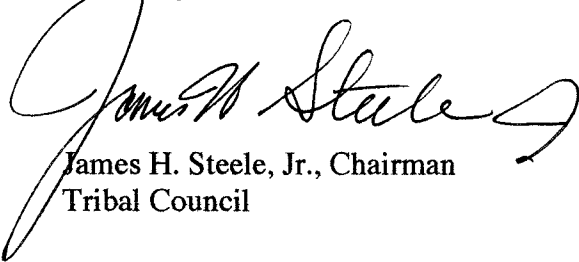
The goal of Indian Education for All is Constitutional, Court directed, and good for all citizens.

Our schools have made great strides this current school year in beginning to incorporate lessons about Montana Indians and other Indians in their content areas with the funding provided in the 2005 Special Session of \$68.00 per student. We need to insure that these efforts continue and \$20.40 is too big a step backward and not sufficient to enable our schools to do what is necessary.

As administrators, teachers and staff of our schools, we want to do the best job possible but need professional development and adequate instructional resources for every classroom to provide quality instruction on Indian Education for All for ALL our students.

We are proud to be a part of this historical educational effort in our state. Please help by supporting SB 390.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "James H. Steele, Jr.", written in dark ink. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

James H. Steele, Jr., Chairman
Tribal Council